

TV TO GO

A treat: Conleth Hill as Graham Norton's Sergeant PJ Collins



HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO

GAME OF THRONES' CONLETH HILL ON HIS DREAM ROLE IN THE ITV ADAPTATION OF GRAHAM NORTON'S MURDER MYSTERY

You've described Sgt PJ Collins as the best part you've ever been presented with.

I suppose it's the anti-hero aspect of him. He's not your conventional detective or policeman lead in a whodunnit. He's flawed and real. He's an outsider. There are so many beautiful things about him. He's got empathy. He's not the best policeman in the world but he's a very good human being.

Were you already a fan of Graham Norton's novel?

I read the book and loved the character but then years went by and I assumed some big star would be playing it if it ever went to TV or film. The scripts are so excellent and when I heard that Kathy Burke was going to be directing I just felt that it was too good to be true, in a way.

Did Graham visit the set when you were filming in West Cork?

Graham was busy doing all his many jobs brilliantly but he visited one day on set. It happened to be the day the ice-cream truck was there. I think it was intentional, I don't know. But he was lovely. He let them get on with the filming.

Where is PJ in his life when we first meet him?

I think he's in the midst of his mundanity and his everyday existence. He's being asked to intervene in non-police matters and things he shouldn't be bothered with. He seems to spend

most of his time trying to catch speeders - cars going through the village. He's kind of just getting on with it and then suddenly these bones are discovered and it changes his life. I love his excitement when he realises, 'Oh my God, this is a real case', not just trying to mediate between neighbours.

Did you get involved with the swimming at the end of each day's shooting with the rest of the cast?

I participated in the swimming a few times but I wasn't as hardy as the girls. We were all outside in Lough Hyne, which is a seawater lake, believe it or not. Oh, it was just stunning. Go to West Cork. But no, I was quite mindful. I went out about three times the whole of the 13-week shoot because I didn't want to get sick.

In the past you've enjoyed not being recognised in the street, even at the height of Game Of Thrones when you were playing Lord Varys. How will you cope if viewers take PJ to their hearts?

I do like my work talking for me. I'm very lucky because everything I'm in is quite different. My Magpie Murders character is different to PJ, as was Varys. But if anyone is positive it doesn't take 30 seconds to say thanks. It's not going to change my life, I don't think. And I have a very good F-off-and-leave-me-alone face. **PS**

Holding is on ITV at 9pm on Monday. Catch up on the ITV Hub